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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PORTUGAL ON ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 120807

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Ballard,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Charge d'Affaires delivered reftel points on November 25 to Ambassador Nuno Brito, Portugal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General for Foreign Policy. Brito said, &We were expecting this.8 He said that Minister of Foreign Affairs Amado and Minister of Defense Santos Silva had met with NATO SG Rasmussen last week and informed him that: a) Portugal is committed to sending the no-caveat QRF it has promised, and will not back out of that commitment; and 2) Portugal will participate in the Euro-Gendarmerie police training mission with Republican National Guard trainers. Brito added, &we understand the need for quantity, but we do think that we are providing quality.8

¶2. (C/NF) Charge stressed that the NATO ministerial on December 3-4 would be an ideal time for Portugal to make a public statement supporting President Obama,s decisions on ISAF/Afghanistan, and to announce further commitments to ISAF,s needs. Brito said, &The Minister should be able to endorse the President,s decisions, provided that that does not mean explicitly accepting further commitments. But we will consider new requests.8

¶3. (C/NF) Brito noted that the ministers, in their meeting with Rasmussen, suggested that he work on creating positive public opinion and public support for greater EU member state contributions to ISAF by linking EU commitments in Afghanistan to the enhanced international profile the EU has assumed via endorsement of the Lisbon Treaty.

¶4. (C/NF) Portugal,s current contribution to ISAF comprises a medical team at Kabul airport and two Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams, totaling approximately 87 troops and 28 trainers, and has suffered two deaths since beginning its direct participation in ISAF operations in 2004. The Portuguese also provided a C-130 transport aircraft with a supporting crew of 42 personnel on a three month mission to support Afghan elections. It has since returned. During the NATO Summit last spring, Portugal,s Prime Minister agreed to increase Portuguese troop commitments to ISAF, reportedly with a company-size deployment (approximately 150 combat troops) to Kabul during January 2010 in a force protection role for a one-year period. In addition, the Portuguese will deploy Gendarmerie trainers as part of the European Gendarmerie Force for Police Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams.

¶5. (C/NF) Comment: Brito,s response is no surprise. Portugal has made commitments to ISAF only after long internal debate, but has followed through on every commitment it has made. We should expect Portugal to honor its current promises, but, given the lengthy deliberative process here (involving consultations between the Prime Minister,

President, the National Defense Council, and even the major opposition party to ensure that everyone is on board), we should not expect Portugal to make any immediate new commitments. That being said, high-level contacts (such as granting President Cavaco Silva's request to meet with President Obama in Spring 2010) might very well spur the political commitment to do more. End comment.

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<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/portal:portugal>
BALLARD